

St. Joe Travel Management EA

CULTURAL RESOURCES

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Regulatory Framework

Forest Plan

The Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) Forest Plan requires systematic cultural resource inventory prior to ground-disturbing activities and the preservation of significant cultural resources in place whenever possible. The IPNF Forest Plan also requires consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer to determine significance of historic properties. This site evaluation process is outlined in the Programmatic Agreement among the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Region, The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer regarding Cultural Resources Management on Region 1 National Forests in the State of Idaho (PF: CR-1). This includes consultation with Native American groups to determine if sites of religious or cultural significance are in the area.

National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) directs all federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings (actions, financial support, and authorizations) on properties included in or eligible for the National Register. Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations at 36 CFR part 800 implement NHPA section 106.

Section 110 establishes inventory, nomination, protection, and preservation responsibilities for federally owned historic properties.

NHPA Section 106 requires an assessment of direct and indirect physical effects to cultural resources affected by travel plan implementation and release of the MVUM. Per Forest Service national policy, NHPA Section 106 compliance work (survey, National Register evaluation, effects assessment, and mitigation-treatment) would apply to:

- New road, trail or trailhead construction (motorized and non-motorized)

- Authorization of motorized vehicle use on routes and in areas currently closed to vehicles.

- Authorization of user-created roads and trails as open, designated routes.

- Roads and trails proposed for physical closure, especially obliteration.

Roads and trails proposed for new construction; newly designated or authorized routes and areas; and routes proposed for permanent closure (and obliteration) may be inventoried as part of the travel plan NEPA analysis (see above) or as part of travel plan implementation. In the case of “open or closed” travel plan decisions, site-specific NEPA and NHPA analyses will usually be required for subsequent (tiered) travel plan-related projects such as route obliteration or new OHV trail construction. This project only involves the authorization (i.e. designation) of motorized routes. It does not include road, trail, or trailhead construction or any other physical work on the ground.

Affected Environment

Analysis Methods

Analysis Area

The spatial bounds of this project for the cultural resources analysis include the entire St. Joe Ranger District, however the Area of Potential Effect (APE) specifically includes all roads and trails available for motorized use. Roads in the analysis area include up to a 300-foot area on either side of the centerline to account for dispersed recreation, and trails in the analysis area include up to a 100-foot area on either side of the trail's centerline to account for dispersed recreation. It should be noted, however, that access to dispersed sites will only be allowed in those areas where sites currently exist. No new dispersed recreation sites will be designated or authorized under this decision. In some cases, roads included in the travel plan are not entirely contained within National Forest System Lands. In these cases, the affected area may include lands owned or managed by other land management agencies or private landowners, and the cultural sites in these areas would be managed by those entities. In addition, some of the cultural resources in the project area extend beyond the defined APE. In those cases, the analysis includes the entire site.

Methods Used

Motorized access to National Forest System Lands provides for a wide array of recreational opportunities. It also provides easier access to historic properties and archaeological sites on the forest. This increases the likelihood that recreational users will encounter and damage (either inadvertently or with intent) cultural sites.

Since no new open motorized routes were added to the system under any alternative, following national direction, additional Section 106 Inventory was not conducted for this analysis. Instead, existing information was used to assess the potential for adverse effects along motorized routes and the adjacent lands that provide access to dispersed sites.

A Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis was conducted by overlaying locations of known historic properties with the alternatives proposed in this document. This analysis included an area 300 feet on either side of roads and an area 100 feet on either side of motorized trails to account for potential motorized access to dispersed sites.

Known sites which are located in the APE have been analyzed for potential effects. The results of this analysis are discussed below.

Existing Condition

The APE for the St. Joe Travel Management Plan contains a number of cultural or historic sites of various types. These sites range in type from historic trails, to mining sites, to lithic scatters. Some of these sites have been evaluated and were found to be ineligible to the National Register, some have been determined to be eligible, and many have been recorded as a part of past projects but have never been evaluated for National Register eligibility. There are 189 known cultural sites in the APE for roads open to motorized use, and 33 known cultural sites in the APE for trails open to motorized use (this includes both ATV [i.e., OHV \leq 50"] and single-track trails).

Environmental Consequences

Analysis Methods

Analysis Area

The spatial bounds of this project for the cultural resources analysis are the same as the affected area, which includes all roads and trails on St. Joe Ranger District proposed to be open for motorized use. Roads open for motorized use on the ranger district include an area up to 300 feet on either side of the centerline to account for motorized access to dispersed sites. Trails open to motorized use on the ranger district include an area up to 100 feet on either side of the trail's centerline to account for motorized access to dispersed sites. In some cases, roads included in the travel plan are not entirely contained within National Forest System Lands. In these cases, the affected area may include lands owned or managed by other land management agencies or private land owners. These lands were not included in the cultural resources analysis for the St. Joe Travel Management Plan, if cultural sites are present in these areas, they will be managed by the appropriate land owner. In addition, some of the cultural resources in the project area extend beyond the defined APE. In those cases, the analysis includes the entire cultural site.

Analysis Timeframe

Temporal analysis for cultural resources is absolute. When a historic or cultural site is affected, those effects are generally permanent and have been analyzed as such.

Methods Used

This project required an in depth GIS analysis to evaluate which known sites on the St. Joe Ranger District are within the APE, and which of those sites may be adversely affected through implementation of the St. Joe Travel Management Plan. This analysis was completed by intersecting the locations of known historic properties with the proposed motorized routes. This analysis included a 300-foot corridor on either side of roads, and a 100-foot corridor on either side of motorized trails. It should be noted, that although all sites within the dispersed recreation corridors have been analyzed, the vast majority of these areas will not be impacted by motorized use. Dispersed camping will only be allowed in those areas where sites currently exist. No new dispersed recreation sites will be designated or authorized under this decision.

Alternative A - No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

Current management practices would continue under Alternative A. People would be allowed to use motorized vehicles on routes where motorized use is currently allowed. Current management practices do not restrict cross-country travel, so unregulated cross-country travel and travel to dispersed sites from all routes that currently allow motorized use would continue under this alternative, creating the potential for an increase in adverse effects to cultural resources that are located outside designated travel routes as motorized use increases with population numbers.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects occur when past, present and foreseeable activities overlap with the proposed activities. In this case, the no-action alternative of continuing current management practices may result in the cumulative increase in damage to cultural resources over time. This would be a result of continued cross-country travel in areas where cultural resources are present. As populations in the area increase, motorized recreation use may also increase, adding to these potential damages.

Alternatives B, C and D – Action Alternatives

Direct and Indirect Effects

These alternatives would designate roads and trails for motorized use, restrict cross-country travel, and result in an overall reduction in motorized routes by approximately 136-220 miles (or 6.6% to 10.7%). Any of the action alternatives, if implemented, would result in an overall reduction in adverse effects to cultural resources since motorized use would be restricted only to those roads and trails that are designated open, and a narrow corridor along them. Impacts to cultural resources are most likely to occur as a result of the dispersed recreation corridor. There are approximately 582 known cultural sites that are within the boundary of the St. Joe Ranger District. Of these 582 sites, 189 are located within the 300-foot corridor on roads that would be open to motorized use and dispersed recreation under the action alternatives, and 33 are located within the 100-foot corridor on trails that would be open to motorized use and dispersed recreation (3 of these are also in the road corridor and are included in that number as well).

Of the known sites in the project area, 100 have been previously determined to be Eligible to the National Register, 28 have been previously determined to be Ineligible, and 90 have not been evaluated for their eligibility. Unevaluated sites and sites that have not had an appropriate formal designation of eligibility are treated like eligible sites for the purposes of this analysis. A review of these sites' site forms was completed, and the sites were assessed for possible effects due to the off road motorized use in the recreation corridor. Effects were considered based on site type, location and landform.

Out of the 190 eligible and unevaluated sites in the APE, 24 have no chance of being adversely effected due to this project's activity. These sites will not be affected because they are either a) on the opposite side of a creek or river from the road; b) are a Forest Service Administrative site (i.e., a ranger station) where dispersed camping will not be occurring; c) are in or adjacent to a Forest Service administrative site (i.e., a campground or picnic area) where current management activities would not change; d) are separated from the road by some sort of barrier (i.e., a closed road or ridgeline); or e) are on a steep slope where motorized vehicles are physically unable to leave the road prism.

Forty of the unevaluated or eligible cultural resources in the APE have been assessed as "unlikely" to be affected by implementation of the travel management plan. These sites are unlikely to be affected because they are either a) in a creek bed; b) on a moderately steep or heavily timbered slope; or c) the site's type is not conducive to being affected by passers-by.

The remaining 126 sites are considered to have potential for effects by motorized use, if motorized use would occur to access dispersed sites, where these sites exist. In order to identify and stabilize damage that may have already been incurred by motorized access, and to prevent any further damage from occurring to cultural sites, at least 50 acres of the open road buffers will be inventoried each year. This inventory will begin in areas that receive heavy dispersed recreation use. As cultural sites are identified in these areas, a monitoring plan will be developed to protect them as per the NHPA Section 106 Protocols for compliance with the Travel Management Rule Clearwater, Idaho Panhandle and Nez Perce National Forests in North Idaho USDA Forest Service, Northern Region.

All action alternatives would result in better protection of cultural resources than current conditions.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are the incremental impact of the proposal when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes those actions. The cumulative effect is the overlap in space and time of the effects of the proposed project with the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.

In this case, no cumulative effects are expected as a result of the action alternatives. For past and present projects, cultural resource surveys have been conducted and adverse effects mitigated through consultation with State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers. Future projects occurring on federal land will require prior cultural resource surveys and if adverse effects are imminent, mitigation or avoidance measures would be designed.

Regulatory Consistency

Forest Plan

All alternatives adhere to the 2015 Forest Plan which calls for the preservation of significant cultural resources in place whenever possible. All significant cultural resources in the project area will be preserved in accordance with the 2015 Forest Plan. Monitoring will assess impacts to those cultural resources in the APE and mitigate for any potential damages.

National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) directs all federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings (actions, financial support, and authorizations) on properties included in or eligible for the National Register (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations at 36 CFR part 800 implement NHPA section 106). Qualified archaeologists have systematically analyzed the potential impacts of implementation of the St. Joe Travel Management Plan.

Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and Native American groups has been completed as in accordance with the NHPA.